US009247788B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Brace et al.

(10) **Patent No.: US 9,247,788 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent: Feb. 2, 2016**

(54) **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT STRAP RETAINING DEVICES**

(71) Applicant: **3M INNOVATIVE PROPERTIES COMPANY**, St. Paul, MN (US)

(72) Inventors: **Thomas J. Brace**, St. Paul, MN (US); **William A. Mittelstadt**, Woodbury, MN (US); **David M. Blomberg**, Lino Lakes, MN (US)

(73) Assignee: **3M Innovative Properties Company**, St. Paul, MN (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 87 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **13/833,309**

(22) Filed: **Mar. 15, 2013**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2014/0216476 A1 Aug. 7, 2014

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 13/756,895, filed on Feb. 1, 2013.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

A61B 19/00	(2006.01)
A44B 11/25	(2006.01)
A62B 18/08	(2006.01)
A41D 13/11	(2006.01)
A44B 11/06	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***A44B 11/2592*** (2013.01); ***A62B 18/084*** (2013.01); *A41D 13/1161* (2013.01); *A44B 11/06* (2013.01); *Y10T 24/45581* (2015.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC A41D 13/1161; A44B 11/2592; A44B 11/06; A44B 11/065; A61F 9/025; A61F 9/027; G02C 1/04; G02C 2200/06; G02C 2200/08; G02C 3/003; G02C 5/2263; A62B 18/084; Y10T 24/45581; Y10T 24/214

USPC ..... 128/858, 863, 201.19, 873; 24/16 PB, 24/634, 635

See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

2,928,387	A *	3/1960	Layne	128/201.19
2,998,818	A	9/1961	Tabor	
3,013,556	A	12/1961	Galleher, Jr.	

(Continued)

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

CA	2 402 743	10/2001
CN	2800855	6/2005

(Continued)

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

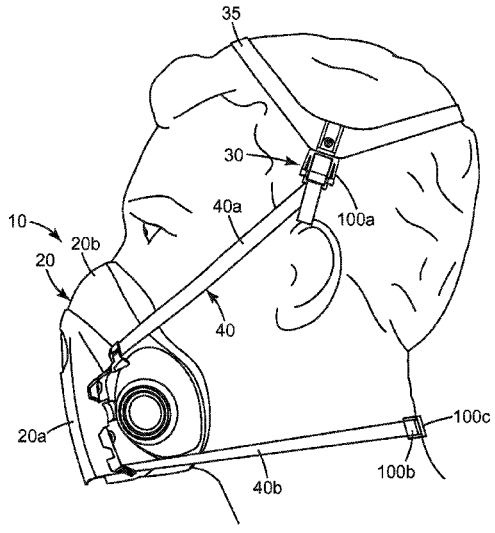
International Application PCT/US2014/011587 Search Report dated Nov. 26, 2014.

Primary Examiner — Michael Brown
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Peter L. Olson

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A strap retaining device having an actuation arm that may engage a retaining tab is provided. In an exemplary embodiment, the strap retaining device includes a frame, a retention tab pivotally connected to the frame, and an actuation arm connected to the frame and having a first actuation element movable towards the retention tab from a neutral position to an actuated. The first actuation ramp is movable in a first plane to cause the retention tab to move in a second plane that is perpendicular to the first plane.

26 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

3,154,073	A		10/1964	Klinger
3,605,204	A		9/1971	Amundsen
3,900,923	A	*	8/1975	Thomas ..... 24/16 PB
4,062,357	A		12/1977	Laerdal
4,419,993	A		12/1983	Petersen
4,536,440	A		8/1985	Berg
4,727,630	A	*	3/1988	Alan 24/593.11
4,790,306	A		12/1988	Braun
4,807,619	A		2/1989	Dyrud
4,843,688	A		7/1989	Ikeda
4,850,347	A		7/1989	Skov
4,874,399	A		10/1989	Reed
4,971,052	A		11/1990	Edwards
5,025,052	A		6/1991	Crater
5,035,239	A		7/1991	Edwards
5,062,421	A		11/1991	Burns
5,099,026	A		3/1992	Crater
5,181,280	A		1/1993	Zachry
5,181,507	A		1/1993	Michel et al.
5,307,796	A		5/1994	Kronzer
5,411,576	A		5/1995	Jones
5,441,046	A		8/1995	Starr
5,472,481	A		12/1995	Jones
5,558,089	A		9/1996	Castiglione
5,566,427	A		10/1996	Lathrop
5,617,849	A		4/1997	Springett
5,657,493	A		8/1997	Ferrero
5,706,804	A		1/1998	Baumann
5,711,036	A		1/1998	Kita
5,724,677	A		3/1998	Bryant
5,727,259	A		3/1998	Kawamata
5,906,033	A		5/1999	Mukaiyama
5,908,598	A		6/1999	Rousseau
5,924,420	A		7/1999	Reischel
D424,688	S		5/2000	Bryant
6,057,256	A		5/2000	Krueger
6,062,221	A		5/2000	Brostrom
6,068,799	A		5/2000	Rousseau
6,119,692	A		9/2000	Byram
6,123,077	A		9/2000	Bostock
D431,647	S		10/2000	Henderson
6,125,849	A		10/2000	Williams
6,161,267	A	*	12/2000	Trautwein 24/635
6,213,122	B1		4/2001	Rousseau
6,238,466	B1		5/2001	Rousseau
D443,927	S		6/2001	Chen
6,432,175	B1		8/2002	Jones
6,457,473	B1		10/2002	Brostrom
6,691,378	B1		2/2004	Chou
6,694,532	B2		2/2004	Chen
6,732,733	B1		5/2004	Brostrom
6,928,657	B2		8/2005	Bell
7,028,689	B2		4/2006	Martin
7,275,536	B2		10/2007	Godoy
7,296,305	B2		11/2007	Ketterer
7,340,804	B2		3/2008	Saderholm
8,132,603	B2		3/2012	Hogan
2003/0084903	A1		5/2003	Fecteau
2003/0154984	A1		8/2003	Fernandes
2004/0035428	A1		2/2004	Olsen
2006/0207600	A1		9/2006	Burrow
2009/0300888	A1		12/2009	Shiue
2012/0222202	A1		9/2012	Chang
2012/0266418	A1		10/2012	Chou
2014/0216472	A1		8/2014	Brace

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

DE	9300181	1/1993
DE	9419623	3/1995
DE	29517776	3/1996
EP	1 001 830	3/2004
EP	1454825	9/2004
EP	1495785	1/2005
GB	523822	1/1939
GB	2059782	4/1981
GB	2092009	8/1982
GB	2 338 787	11/2003
GB	2429537	2/2007
GB	2 454 451	5/2009
GB	2 477 738	8/2011
GB	2 489 045	3/2013
JP	53-153700	12/1978
JP	2010864	1/1990
JP	07-185027	7/1995
JP	10-99457	4/1998
JP	10-201866	8/1998
JP	2000-140139	5/2000
JP	2000-288107	10/2000
JP	2001-104501	4/2001
JP	2004-267694	9/2004
JP	2005-000218	1/2005
JP	2005-103045	4/2005
JP	2005-124818	5/2005
JP	2005-143860	6/2005
JP	2005-152229	6/2005
JP	3117487	11/2005
KR	2000-014559	7/2000
KR	20-0241398	7/2001
KR	2001-0090697	10/2001
KR	10-0374386	2/2003
KR	20-0313897	5/2003
KR	10-0396183	8/2003
KR	20-0338209	12/2003
KR	20-2003-036743	1/2004
KR	20-0352578	5/2004
KR	20-0384194	5/2005
WO	86/01734	3/1986
WO	WO 86/01734	3/1986
WO	WO 99/06116	2/1999
WO	WO 99/17840	4/1999
WO	WO 00/01737	1/2000
WO	WO 00/50122	8/2000
WO	WO 01/66194	9/2001
WO	WO 2004/039185	5/2004
WO	2008/010193	1/2008
WO	WO 2012/100116	7/2012

* cited by examiner

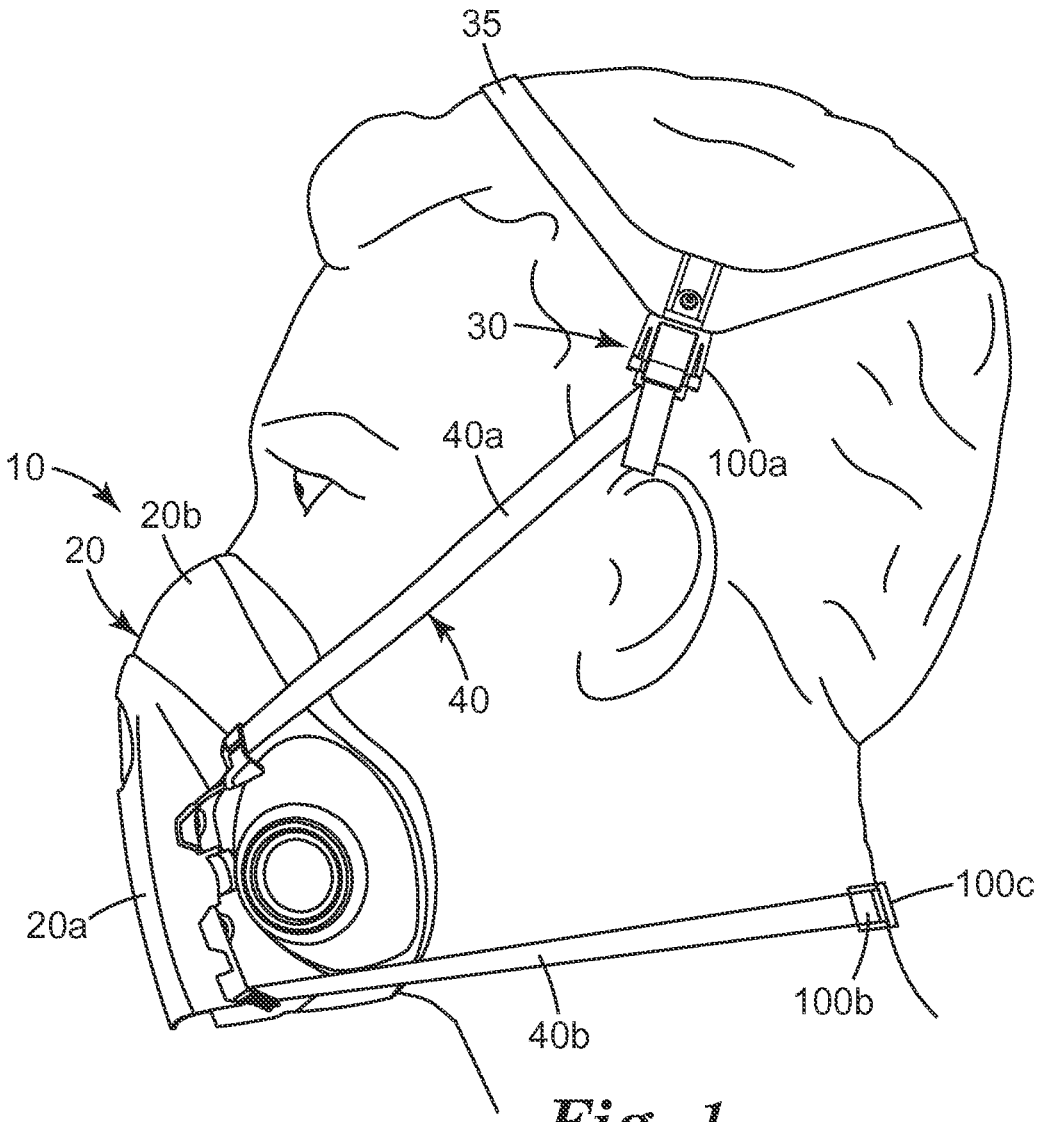


Fig. 1

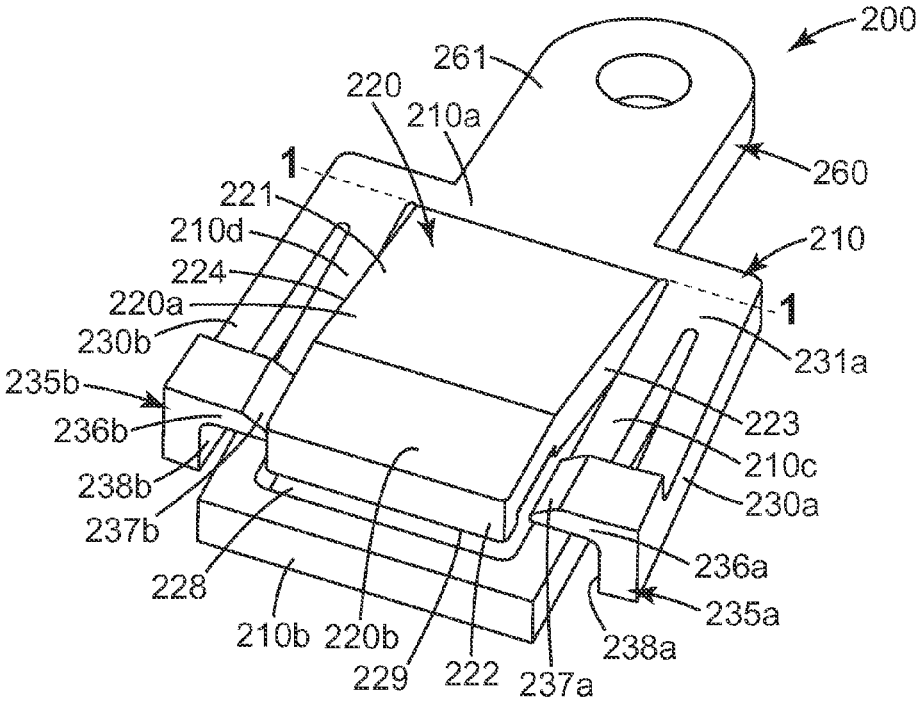

200
261
220
210a
1
221
210d
224
220a
230b
235b
236b
238b
237b
228
210b
220b
229
222
237a
238a
235a
236a
230a
210c
223
231a
210
260
1

Fig. 2

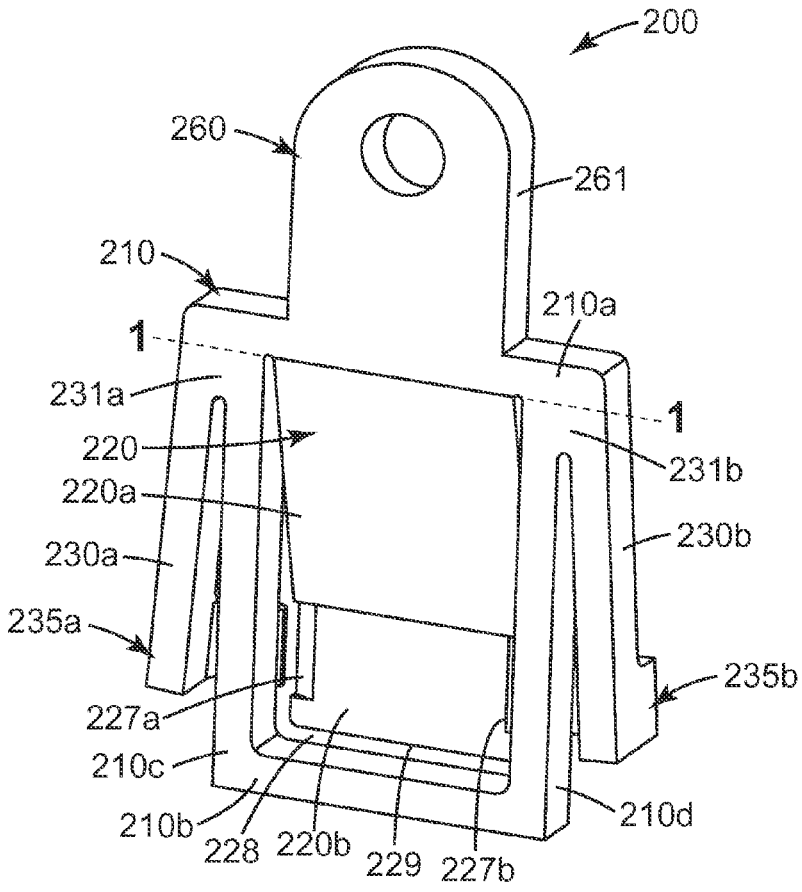

200
260
261
210
210a
1
231a
220
220a
230a
235a
227a
210c
210b
228
220b
229
227b
210d
231b
230b
235b
1

Fig. 3

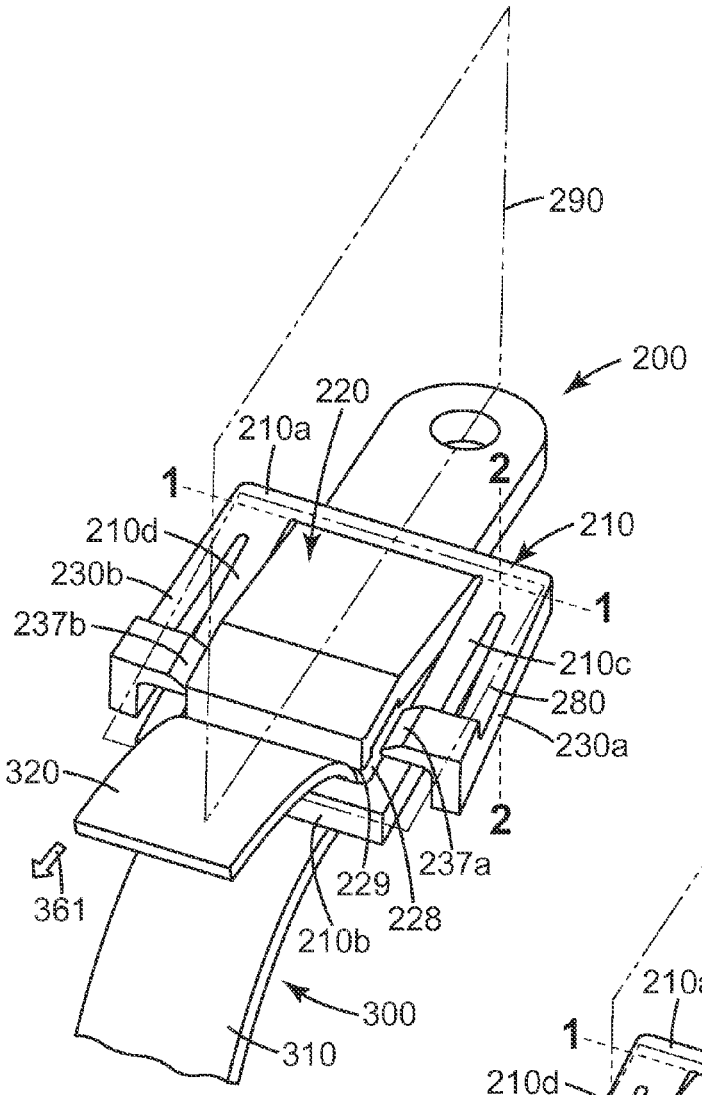

290
200
220
210a
1
2
210d
210
230b
237b
1
210c
280
230a
320
2
237a
229
228
361
210b
300
310

Fig. 4

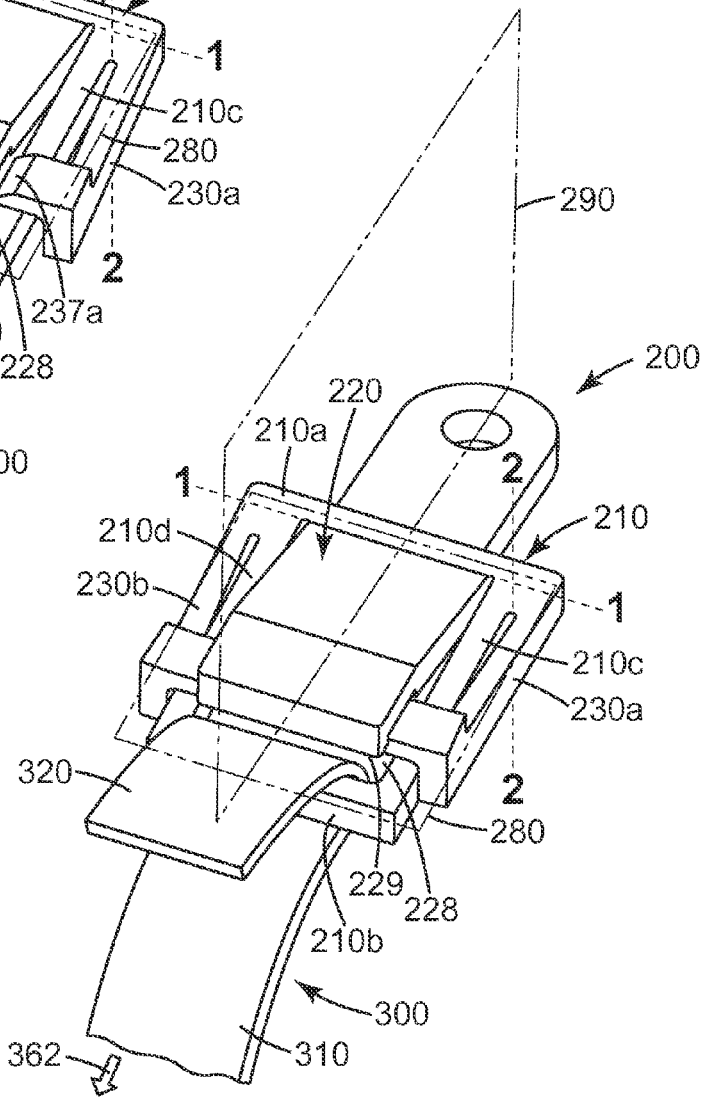

290
200
220
210a
1
2
210d
210
230b
1
210c
230a
320
2
280
229
228
210b
300
362
310

Fig. 5

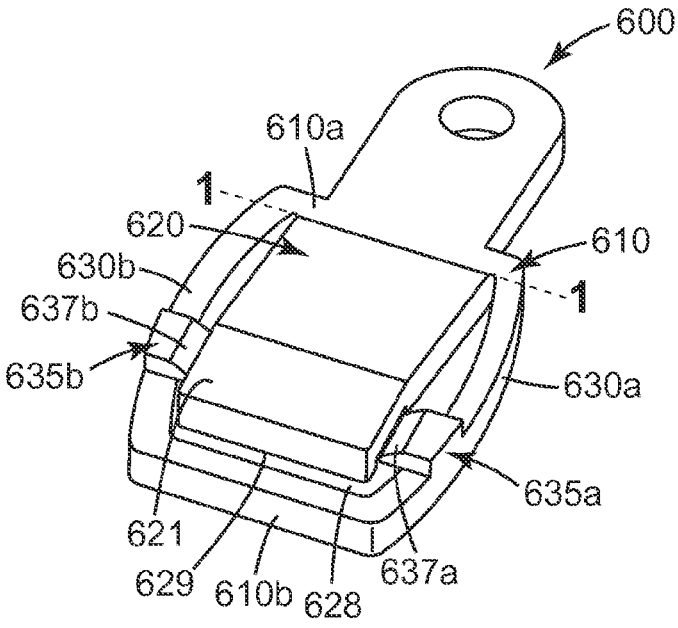

600
610a
1
620
610
630b
637b
1
635b
630a
635a
621
629
610b
628
637a

Fig. 6

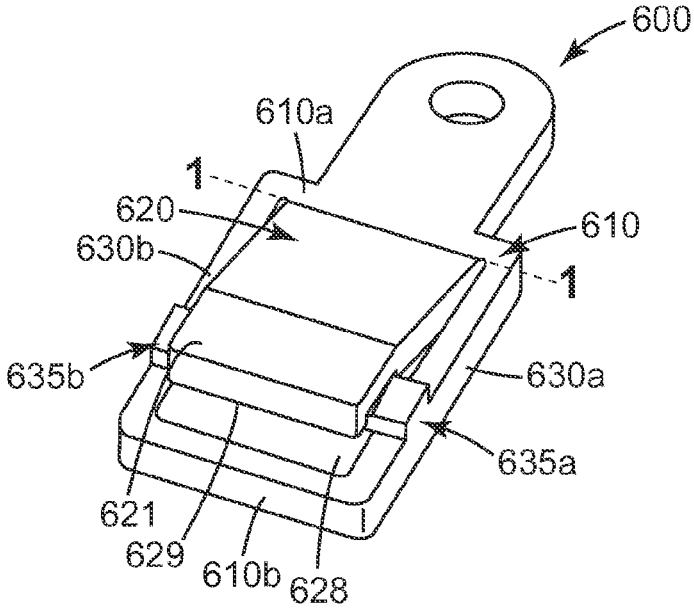

600
610a
1
620
610
630b
1
635b
630a
635a
621
629
610b
628

Fig. 7

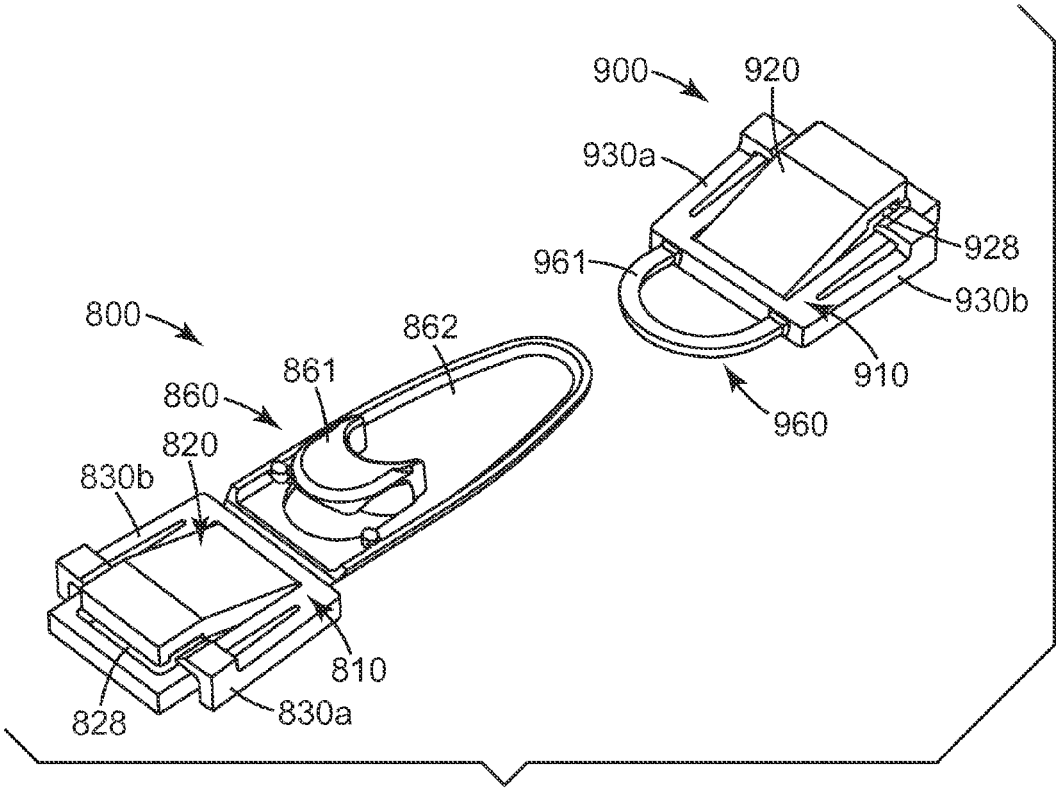

900
920
930a
928
961
930b
910
960
800
862
861
860
820
830b
810
828
830a

Fig. 8

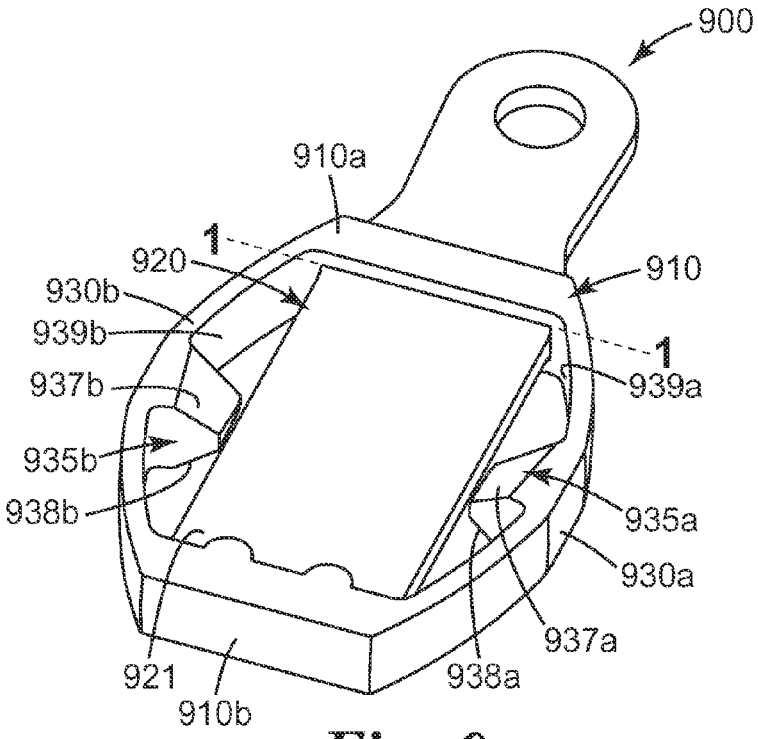

900
910a
1
920
910
930b
939b
1
939a
937b
935b
938b
935a
930a
937a
921
910b
938a

Fig. 9

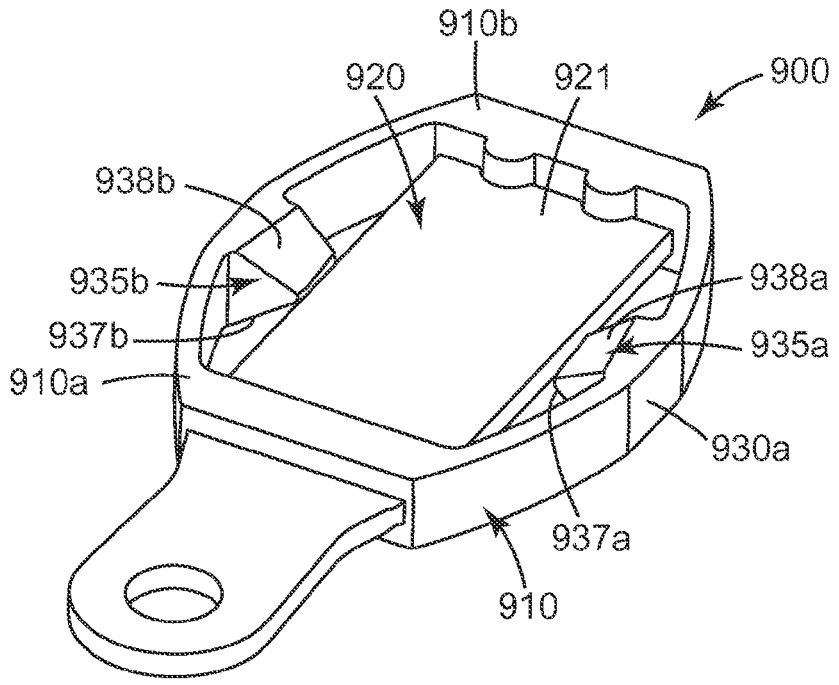

910b
920
921
900
938b
935b
938a
937b
935a
910a
930a
937a
910

Fig. 10

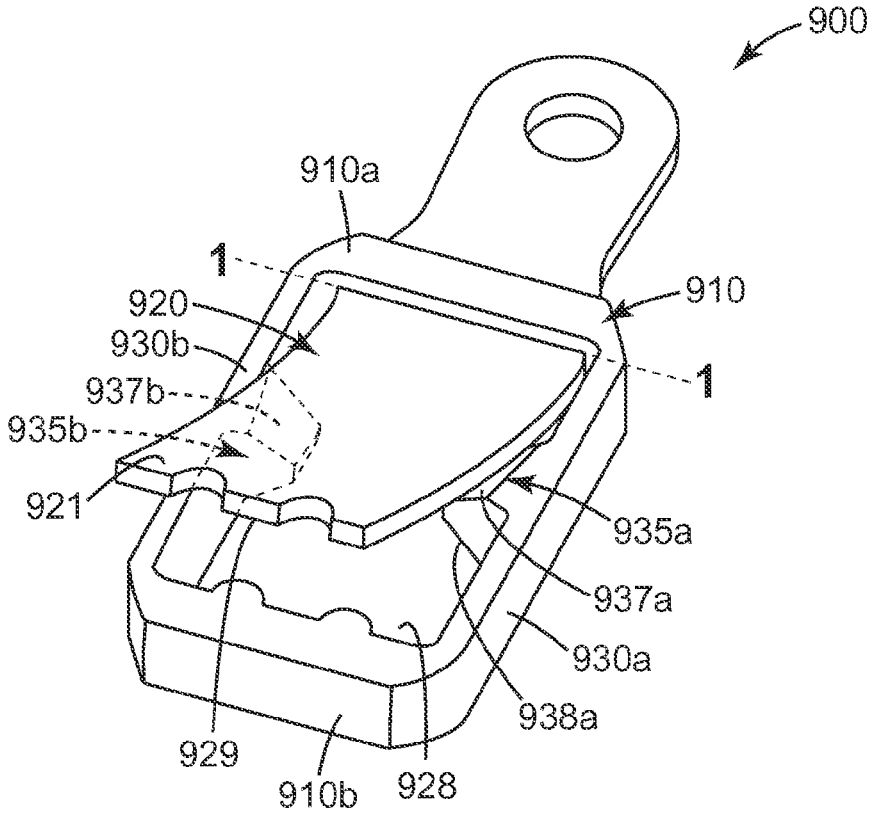

900
910a
1
910
920
930b
1
937b
935b
921
935a
937a
930a
938a
929
910b
928

Fig. 11

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT STRAP RETAINING DEVICES

TECHNICAL FIELD

This disclosure relates to strap retaining devices, in particular strap retaining devices for personal protective equipment having an actuation arm that may engage a retaining tab.

BACKGROUND

Personal protective devices often include one or more straps to secure the device in an appropriate position about a user. Respiratory protection devices that cover a user's nose and mouth, for example, often include one or more straps extending around the head of the user. In order to maintain a desired fit, straps may be elastic or adjustable to a suitable length for a particular user. Various strap retention devices and buckles have been provided that may allow for the length or tension of the strap to be manually adjusted.

SUMMARY

The present disclosure provides a strap retaining device for a personal protection device including a frame, a retention tab pivotally connected to the frame, and a first actuation arm connected to the frame and comprising a first actuation element movable towards the retention tab. The first actuation element is movable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which the first actuation element causes the retention tab to move in a second plane that is substantially perpendicular to the first plane. In an exemplary embodiment, the first actuation element is a ramp, and the first actuation element contacts an angled surface of the retention tab in the actuated position. In various exemplary embodiments, the frame, strap retention tab, and actuation arm are integrally formed.

The present disclosure further provides a harness assembly for a respirator including first and second strap retaining devices each including a frame, a retention tab pivotally connected to the frame, a strap channel and a first actuation arm connected to the frame and comprising a first actuation ramp movable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which the first actuation ramp contacts a surface of the retention tab and causes the retention tab to move in a second plane that is perpendicular to the first plane, a first strap positioned in a strap channel of the first strap retainer about a portion of the frame of the first strap retainer, and a second strap positioned in a strap channel of the second strap retainer about a portion of the frame of the second strap retaining devices. The first strap retaining device comprises a first attachment element and the second strap retaining device comprises a second attachment element and the first attachment element is attachable to the second attachment element.

The above summary is not intended to describe each disclosed embodiment or every implementation. The Figures and the Detailed Description, which follow, more particularly exemplify illustrative embodiments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

The disclosure may be further explained with reference to the appended Figures, wherein like structure is referred to by like numerals throughout the several views, and wherein:

FIG. **1** shows a side view of an exemplary personal protective device including strap retaining devices according to the present disclosure.

FIG. **2** shows a front perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device according to the present disclosure.

FIG. **3** shows a rear perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device according to the present disclosure.

FIG. **4** shows a front perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device and strap according to the present disclosure in a neutral or retained position.

FIG. **5** shows a front perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device and strap according to the present disclosure in an actuated position.

FIG. **6** shows a front perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device according to the present disclosure in a retained position.

FIG. **7** shows a front perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device according to the present disclosure in an actuated position.

FIG. **8** shows a front perspective view of exemplary first and second strap retaining devices according to the present disclosure configured for attachment.

FIG. **9** shows a front perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device according to the present disclosure.

FIG. **10** shows a rear perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device according to the present disclosure.

FIG. **11** shows a front perspective view of an exemplary strap retaining device according to the present disclosure in an activated position.

While the above-identified figures set forth various embodiments of the disclosed subject matter, other embodiments are also contemplated. In all cases, this disclosure presents the disclosed subject matter by way of representation and not limitation. It should be understood that numerous other modifications and embodiments can be devised by those skilled in the art which fall within the scope and spirit of the principles of this disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present disclosure provides a personal protective equipment strap retaining device. The strap retaining device includes a retaining tab and one or more actuation arms. The retaining tab applies a force to a strap to limit the ability of the strap to slide through the strap retaining device. The one or more actuation tabs may be flexed to raise the retaining tab and allow the strap to slide through the retaining device more freely. An exemplary strap retaining device according to the present disclosure securely maintains the strap at a desired position, but allows a user to quickly and easily adjust the length of the strap by operating the one or more actuation arms.

FIG. **1** shows an exemplary personal protective device **10** including exemplary strap retaining devices **100***a*, **100***b*, **100***c*. The personal protective device **10** is a respiratory protection device including a mask body **20** and a harness assembly **30**. The mask body may include a rigid or semi-rigid portion **20***a* and a face contacting portion **20***b*. The face contacting portion **20***b* may be formed of a soft or compliant material that provides a comfortable fit and is able to seal against the face of a wearer to prevent ingress of external air. The head harness assembly may include one or more straps **40**, such as upper straps **40***a* and lower straps **40***b*, to secure respiratory protection device **10** in a position of use over the nose and mouth of the wearer. Upper straps **40***a* and lower straps **40***b* may be portions of a single continuous integral strap that passes through a loop or attachment element of mask body **20** or may be discrete individual straps that are each attached to mask body **20**. In an exemplary embodiment, harness assembly **30** includes a strap support **35** configured to

fit generally about the crown of a wearer's head. Strap support **35** may be made of any suitable material, and in some embodiments may be a head covering such as a cap, hard hat, hood, beanie, netting, or other suitable strap support. Upper and lower straps **40***a*, **40***b* may be appropriately tensioned such that face contacting portion **20***b* of mask body **20** is adequately positioned and/or sealed against a wearer's face.

In an exemplary embodiment, harness assembly **30** includes a first strap retaining device **100***a* attached to strap support **35** and allows for adjustment of upper strap **40***a*, for example. A second strap retaining device **100***b* is positioned proximate the rear of a wearer's neck and may allow adjustment of lower strap **40***b*, for example. In some exemplary embodiments, second strap retaining device is configured to be attached to a third retaining device **100***c* which allows for adjustment of another lower strap at an opposite side of the wearer's head. Strap retaining devices **100***a*, **100***b*, and/or **100***c* maintain a desired length of strap **40** between mask body **20** and strap support **35**, for example, while allowing the desired length of strap **40** to be quickly and easily adjusted as described in greater detail below. U.S. application Ser. No. 13/757,337, titled Respiratory Protection Device Harness Assembly, addresses various embodiments of a harness assembly and attachment elements for a harness assembly, and is incorporated herein by reference.

FIGS. **2** and **3** show an exemplary strap retaining device **200** according to the present disclosure. Strap retaining device **200** includes a frame **210**, a retaining tab **220**, and an actuation arm **230***a* attached to frame **210**. Actuation arm **230***a* may engage retaining tab **220** to reduce a force applied by retaining tab **220** to a strap (not shown) positioned through strap retaining device **200**.

In an exemplary embodiment, frame **210** provides a base that various portions of strap retaining device **200** may move relative to and may include a first frame portion **210***a*, and a second frame portion **210***b* in spaced relation to first frame portion **210***a*. First and second frame portions are connected by third and fourth frame portions **210***c* and **210***d*. First, second, third, and fourth frame portions **210***a*, **210***b*, **210***c*, **210***d* form a generally square or rectangular configuration and partially define a strap channel **228** for a strap to pass through, as described further below. Second frame portion **210***b* is positioned such that a strap may be looped around second frame portion **210***b*, and provides a base against which retaining tab **220** may clamp, or apply a force to, a strap to retain the strap at a desired length.

In the exemplary embodiment of FIG. **2**, frame **210** includes four substantially straight frame portions with each frame portion joined to adjacent frame members at an angle of approximately 90 degrees. In other exemplary embodiments, frame **210** may comprise one, two, three, four, or more than four frame portions that exhibit an arcuate shape and may be joined to adjacent frame members at an angle other than 90 degrees. In an exemplary embodiment, frame **210** includes three frame portions, not including third frame portion **210***c*, for example, such that a strap may be more easily positioned in, or removed from, strap retaining device **200**.

Retaining tab **220** extends from frame **210**, for example from frame portion **210***a*. In an exemplary embodiment, retaining tab **220** includes first and second major surfaces separated by a thickness t, and may include an angled surface or ramped portion **220***a* extending away from frame portion **210***a* and generally upward from frame portion **210***a* and/or frame portions **210***b*, **210***c*, **210***d*. Retaining tab **220** may further include a clamp portion **220***b* including one or more retaining features **229**. Retaining feature **229** may include a textured surface, sharp corner, serrated edge and/or other features that may provide additional friction or contact to retain a strap. In an exemplary embodiment, retaining tab **220** exhibits a cantilever configuration such that a first end portion **221** is connected to frame **210**, first frame portion **210***a* for example, while first and second side portions **223**, **224**, and second end portion **222** are not connected to frame **210**.

In an exemplary embodiment, retaining tab **220** is pivotally connected to frame portion **210***a* such that retaining tab **220** may pivot or rotate relative to an axis, such as axis **1-1**, for example. In the embodiment of FIG. **2**, axis **1-1** is proximate a connection between retaining tab **220** and first frame portion **210***a*. In other exemplary embodiments, retaining tab **220** may connect to one or more other portions of frame **210** such that the axis is proximate a central location of retaining tab **220** while two both first end portion **221** and second end portion **222** are not connected to frame **210** and are able to pivot or rotate.

Strap retaining device **200** includes one or more actuation arms that may be actuated to manipulate retaining tab **220**. In an exemplary embodiment, strap retaining device **200** includes a first actuation arm **230***a* connected to frame **210**, for example first or third frame portions **210***a* or **210***c*. First actuation arm **230***a* includes a first end portion **231***a* connected to frame **210**, and extends as a cantilever from frame **210**. Application of force along a length of arm **230***a*, such as a user squeezing arm **230***a* towards retaining tab **220**, causes arm **230***a* to bend or flex about first end portion **231***a*. In an exemplary embodiment, a second actuation arm **230***b* is similarly connected to frame **210**, for example first and fourth frame portions **210***a* or **210***d*, and generally mirrors first actuation arm **230***a*.

Arms **230***a*, **230***b* are biased towards a neutral or retained position, such as the position shown in FIG. **2**, such that when an external force is removed, arm **230** returns to the neutral or retained position. In an exemplary embodiment, arm **230***a* returns to a fully neutral position when not squeezed or pressed by a user. In some exemplary embodiments, arm **230***a* may include a feature, such as a tab (not shown) that contacts a portion of frame **210**, for example, that limits the return of arm **230***a* to a fully neutral position.

In an exemplary embodiment, first and second actuation arms **230***a*, **230***b* include actuation tabs **235***a*, **235***b* having extending portions **236***a*, **236***b* and actuation elements **237***a*, **237***b* that include actuation ramps configured to contact one or more surfaces of retaining tab **220** when arms **230***a*, **230***b* are flexed towards retaining tab **220**. In various exemplary embodiments, actuation elements may be provide in the form of an edge, surface, chamfered corner, or any other suitable feature that may contact one or more surfaces of retaining tab **220** when arms **230***a*, **230***b* are flexed towards retaining tab **220**.

Extending portions **236***a*, **236***b* position ramps **237***a*, **237***b* at desired positions relative to retaining tab **220**. In an exemplary embodiment, extending portions **236***a*, **236***b* position ramps **237***a*, **237***b* proximate retaining tab **220** to allow ramps **237***a*, **237***b* to appropriately contact retaining tab **220** within a desired travel distance between a neutral position and a fully actuated position. A travel distance of ramps **237***a*, **237***b* may be limited by the distance between stop surfaces **238***a*, **238***b* and frame **210**. In various exemplary embodiments, the distance between stop surfaces **238***a*, **238***b* and frame **210** when arms **230***a*, **230***b* are in a neutral or retained position is between approximately 10 mm and 1 mm, 6 mm and 1.5 mm, or of approximately 2 mm. Such a distance may allow easy actuation by a user while limiting the likelihood of inadvertent actuation. In the fully actuated position, a distance between stop surfaces **238***a*, **238***b* and frame **210** may be less

than approximately 1 mm, or approximately 0 mm such that stop surfaces **238***a*, **238***b* contact frame **210** to limit further travel of arms **230***a*, **230***b* and ramps **237***a*, **237***b* when in a fully actuated position.

As shown in FIG. **3**, for example, retaining tab may include engaging surfaces **227***a*, **227***b* having a shape complementary to ramps **237***a*, **237***b*. In an exemplary embodiment, engaging surfaces **227***a*, **227***b* are inward angled surfaces that allow retaining tab **220** to smoothly travel upward as actuation ramps **237***a*, **237***b* are moved from a neutral position to a fully actuated position. Other exemplary engaging surfaces included rounded or chamfered edges, or other suitable features.

Strap retaining device **200** may further include an attachment element **260**. In an exemplary element, attachment element **260** extends from frame **210**, such as frame member **210***a*, and extends away from frame **210** in a direction generally away from, and/or in an opposite direction of, retention tab **220**. Attachment element **260** may include an anchoring tab **261**, for example, shaped and configured for attachment. In an exemplary embodiment, anchoring tab **261** includes one or more recesses, cavities, projections, or other suitable features that may interact with complementary features of a harness assembly, such as a strap support, for example. Attachment element **260** thus may be releasably attached to the strap support, similar to the configuration of strap retaining device **100***a* shown in FIG. **1**, for example. In some exemplary embodiments, attachment element **260** may be configured for attachment to other strap retaining devices. In this way, first and second straps or strap portions can be releasably attached by first and second strap retaining devices according to the present disclosure, similar to the configuration of strap retaining devices **100***b*, **100***c* shown in FIG. **1**, for example.

FIGS. **4** and **5** show an exemplary strap retaining device **200** and a strap **300** positioned through strap retaining device **200**. Certain features of an exemplary strap retaining device **200** of the present disclosure may be understood in view of two reference planes defined relative to strap retaining device **200**. A first plane **280** is generally parallel to a plane of rotation formed by actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b* as they move between neutral and actuated positions. That is, in an exemplary embodiment, actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b* move in first plane **280** when a force is applied to move actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b* from a neutral position to an actuated position. A second plane **290** divides strap retaining device **200** into imaginary first and second halves. First plane **280** and second plane **290** are substantially normal or perpendicular to each other. In various exemplary embodiments, first plane **280** and second plane **290** are substantially perpendicular such that first and second planes **280**, **290** are within 5° of perpendicular, within 2° of perpendicular, or precisely perpendicular.

In an exemplary embodiment, retaining tab **220** may flex, pivot or rotate, for example, about an axis **1-1** that is generally parallel to first plane **280** and normal to second plane **290**. Actuator arm **230***a*, for example, may flex, pivot or rotate, for example, about an axis **2-2** that is generally normal to first plane **280** and substantially parallel to second plane **290**. Accordingly, actuator arm **230***a*, and actuation ramp **237***a* are moveable in first plane **280** towards retaining tab **220**. When actuator arm **230***a* and actuation ramp **237***a* are moved from a neutral position, as shown in FIG. **4**, to an actuated position, as shown in FIG. **5**, actuation ramp **237***a* contacts engaging surface **227***a* of retaining tab **220** to move retaining tab **220** in the second plane. That is, in an exemplary embodiment, motion of arm **230***a* in first plane **280** results in movement of retaining tab **220** in second plane **290**.

Strap **300** includes a tensioning portion **310** and a free end **320**. Tensioning portion **310** may be attached to a personal protective device and maintains a personal protective device, such as a respiratory protection device, in an appropriate position. Free end **320** may provide excess length of strap if tension portion **310** is adjusted to a greater length, for example. In a neutral position shown in FIG. **4**, retaining tab **220** and/or retaining features **229** contact strap **300** and may apply a force against strap **300** towards frame **210**. A force applied to strap **300** may clamp strap **300** against frame **210** limiting movement of strap **300** through strap channel **228**.

When a personal protective device including a strap retaining device **200** is positioned for use, a length of tensioning portion **310** can be decreased, and the strap tightened, by pulling free end **320** generally in a direction shown by arrow **361** for example. When free end **320** is pulled in direction **361**, retaining tab **220** may bend, flex, or pivot, for example, and may lessen a force applied on strap **300** allowing the strap to pass through strap channel **228** and/or over frame portion **210***b*. When free end **320** is released, retaining tab **220** clamps strap **300** against frame **210** to retain strap **300** and maintain tension in tensioning portion **310**. In an exemplary embodiment, although pulling free end **320** may allow strap **300** to move through strap channel **228** and shorten tensioning portion **310**, pulling tension portion **310** does not result in strap **300** moving through strap channel **228** and lengthening tension portion **310**. Additional tension may cause retaining tab **220** to be drawn closer to frame **210** increasing a force applied to strap **300** and further limiting movement of strap **300** through strap channel **228**.

A length of tensioning portion **310** may be easily lengthened, and strap **300** loosened, by a user pushing actuating arms inwardly towards an actuated position shown in FIG. **5**, for example. When a user squeezes actuation arms **230***a*, **230***b*, actuation ramps **237***a*, **237***b* contact engaging surfaces of retaining tab **220** causing retaining tab to move in second plane **290**. Movement of retaining tab **220** increases a space between retaining tab and a portion of frame **210** such that strap **300** may more easily slide through strap channel **228**. With actuation ramps **237***a*, **237***b* in an actuated position and retaining tab **220** raised, a user may easily increase a length of tensioning portion **310** of strap **300** to loosen the device about the user by pulling tension portion **310** in direction **362**, for example.

The components and features of strap retaining device **200** may be formed separately and subsequently joined together to form strap retaining device **200**. In an exemplary embodiment, frame **210**, retaining tab **220**, and one or more actuation arms **230** are formed integrally as a unitary piece, such as by injection molding. In other exemplary embodiments, one or more components may be separately formed and subsequently joined, using sonic welding or other suitable techniques, to form a unitary strap retaining device **200**. A unitary construction provides a simple and relatively inexpensive strap retaining device that may be easily manufactured with few or no assembly or process steps required. Strap retaining device **200** is formed such that a unitary construction may be provided while allowing actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b* and retaining tab **220**, respectively, to flex, pivot, or rotate in different planes that may be substantially perpendicular.

Retaining tab **220** and actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b*, and/or entire strap retaining device **200** may be formed from a material having suitable properties to allow for elastic deformation over a range of normal bending and flexing while exhibiting the ability of retaining tab **220** to apply an appropriate force to a strap positioned through strap retaining device **200**. In an exemplary embodiment, retaining tab **220** and/or actuator

arms **230***a*, **230***b* are made from polypropylene such as a material having the trade name P5M4K-046 available from Flint Hills Resources of Wichita, Kans. Other suitable materials include plastics, polyethylene, acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS), metals, spring steel, other suitable materials as known in the art, and suitable combinations of such materials.

The force required to move actuator arms to a fully actuated position may be dependant in part on the dimensions and geometry of actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b* material properties of actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b*, and a force required to move retaining tab **220**. The force required to move actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b* for example, to an actuated position may be selected to be sufficiently low that actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b* are easily moved to an actuated position by a user, but sufficiently high that inadvertent or unintentional actuation that could allow a strap to inadvertently loosen, for example, is unlikely to occur. In an exemplary embodiment, application of a total actuating force F of about 550 g results in actuation arms **230***a*, **230***b* reaching fully actuated positions and moving retaining tab **220** in second plane **290**. In the fully actuated position, a restoring force of about 550 g is likewise exerted by actuator arms **230***a*, **230***b* to restore arms **230***a*, **230***b* to a neutral position. In various exemplary embodiments, restoring force F is between about 50 g and 1000 g, or between about 250 g and 750 g.

In an exemplary embodiment, strap retaining device **200** provides a robust strap retaining device that may be used throughout the usable life of a personal protective device. In an exemplary embodiment, arms **230***a*, **230***b* may move from neutral to actuated positions many times, in part because flexure of arms **230***a*, **230***b* is desirably limited to an elastic regime. In various exemplary embodiments, a strap retaining device **200** provides arms **230***a*, **230***b* that may be flexed between a neutral position and an actuated position 10,000 times, 100,000 times, or more than 100,000 times without fracture or damage that prevents strap retaining device **200** from functioning.

FIGS. **6** and **7** show an exemplary embodiment of a strap retaining device **600** according to the present disclosure. Strap retaining device **600** includes frame **610**, retaining tab **620**, and one or more actuation arms, such as actuation arms **630***a*, **630***b*. Frame **610** includes a first frame portion **610***a* and a second frame portion **610***b* joined by first and second actuation arms **630***a* and **630***b*. Actuation arms **630***a*, **630***b* exhibit a curved configuration and generally curve outward between first and second frame portions **610***a* and **610***b*.

Similar to strap retaining device **200** described above, retaining tab **620** is pivotally connected to frame portion **610***a* such that retaining tab **620** may pivot or rotate relative to an axis, such as axis **1-1**, for example. In a neutral position, retaining tab **620** and/or clamp portion **621**, may apply a force against a strap positioned through strap channel **628**.

In an exemplary embodiment, first and second actuation arms **630***a*, **630***b* are connected to frame **610**, extending between first and second frame portions **610***a* and **610***b*, and having ends connected to frame portions **610***a* and **610***b*, respectively. Application of force along a length of arms **630***a*, **630***b*, such as a user squeezing arms **630***a*, **630***b* generally inwardly towards retaining tab **620**, causes arms **630***a*, **630***b* to flex and/or straighten. Arms **630***a*, **630***b* are biased towards a curved neutral position, such as the position shown in FIG. **6**, such that arms **630***a*, **630***b* return to the curved neutral position when a force from a user is removed.

Actuation arms **630***a*, **630***b* include actuation tabs **635***a*, **635***b* having and actuation ramps **637***a*, **637***b*, respectively. Actuation ramps **637***a*, **637***b* are configured to contact a surface of retaining tab **620** when arms **630***a*, **630***b* are flexed and/or straightened towards retaining tab **620**. In a neutral position shown in FIG. **6**, retaining tab **620** and/or retaining features **629** contact a strap (not shown) and may apply a force against the strap towards frame **610**. A force applied to the strap may clamp the strap against frame **610** limiting movement of the strap through strap channel **628**. A length of the strap may be easily lengthened, and the strap loosened, by a user pushing actuating arms inwardly towards an actuated position shown in FIG. **7**, for example. When a user squeezes actuation arms **630***a*, **630***b*, actuation arms **630***a*, **630***b* flex and/or straighten causing actuation ramps **637***a*, **637***b* to move in a first plane to contact engaging surfaces of retaining tab **620** and cause retaining tab **620** to move in a second plane. Movement of retaining tab **620** increases a space between retaining tab **620** and a portion of frame **610** such that the strap may more easily pass through strap channel **628**. With actuation ramps **637***a*, **637***b* in an actuated position and retaining tab **620** raised, a user may easily increase a length of the strap.

FIG. **8** shows exemplary embodiments of strap retaining devices **800** and **900** having attachment elements **860** and **960**, respectively. Similar to strap retaining devices **200** and **600** described above, first and second strap retaining devices **800** and **900** include frames **810**, **910**, retention tabs **820**, **920** pivotally connected to frames **810**, **910**, strap channels **828**, **928** and first and second actuation arms **830***a*, **830***b*, **930***a*, **930***b* connected to fames **810**, **910**, respectively. First and second actuation arms **830***a*, **830***b*, **930***a*, **930***b* include actuation ramps movable towards retention tabs **820**, **920** in a first plane to contact a surface of the retention tabs **820**, **920** and move the retention tabs **820**, **920** in a second plane that is substantially perpendicular to the first plane. First and second straps may be positioned in strap channels **828**, **928**.

First strap retainer **800** includes a first attachment element **860** that is attachable to a second attachment element **960** of second strap retainer **900**. First and second attachment elements **860**, **960** thus allow first and second straps or strap portions to be releasably attached, while also allowing easy tensioning or loosening of the first and second straps or strap portions, similar to the configuration of strap retaining devices **100***b*, **100***c* of FIG. **1**, for example. First and second attachment elements may include any suitable attachment feature that allows that first and second strap retaining devices to be attached. In an exemplary embodiment, first and second strap retaining devices **800**, **900** are releasably attached, and are attached such that the straps are secure and not likely to be inadvertently separated but allowing for pivoting or relative rotation between first and second strap retaining devices **800**, **900**.

In an exemplary embodiment, first attachment element **860** comprises a hook **861** and second attachment element **960** comprises a loop **961**. Loop **961** may be positioned within hook **861** to attach first and second attachment elements. When in use, tension of straps positioned in first and second strap retaining devices **800**, **900** prevents separation of first and second attachment elements **860**, **960**. In an exemplary embodiment, first attachment element **860** further includes a generally planar member **862**. When first and second attachment elements **860**, **960** are attached, planar member **862** provides rigidity to the attachment such that second strap retaining device **900** is maintained in a desired orientation. In this way, pressure of strap retaining devices **800**, **900** created by the tension of one or more straps is evenly distributed over a surface of a wearer's body that may be contacted by strap retaining devices **800**, **900** such that no areas of focused pressure impinge on the wearer's body. First and second

attachment elements **860**, **960** may comprise other suitable attachment elements such as buckles, connectors, interference fits, hook and loop fasteners or other suitable features as known in the art that allow first and second strap retaining devices to be attachable.

FIGS. **9**, **10** and **11** show an exemplary embodiment of a strap retaining device **900** according to the present disclosure that is reversible such that strap retaining device **900** may be used in a first orientation or a second orientation. FIGS. **9** and **10** show front and rear views of strap retaining device **900**, respectively, and FIG. **11** shows strap retaining device **900** in an activated position.

Strap retaining device **900** includes frame **910**, retaining tab **920**, and one or more actuation arms, such as actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b*. Frame **910** includes a first frame portion **910***a* and a second frame portion **910***b* joined by first and second actuation arms **930***a* and **930***b*. Actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b* exhibit a curved configuration and generally curve outward between first and second frame portions **910***a* and **910***b*.

Similar to strap retaining device **200** described above, retaining tab **920** may be pivotally connected to frame portion **910***a*, in an exemplary embodiment, such that retaining tab **920** may pivot or rotate relative to an axis, such as axis **1-1**, for example. In a neutral position, retaining tab **920** and/or clamp portion **921**, may apply a force against a strap positioned through strap channel **928**.

In an exemplary embodiment, first and second actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b* are connected to frame **910**, extending between first and second frame portions **910***a* and **910***b*, and having ends connected to frame portions **910***a* and **910***b*, respectively. Application of force along a length of arms **930***a*, **930***b*, such as a user squeezing arms **930***a*, **930***b* generally inwardly towards retaining tab **920**, causes arms **930***a*, **930***b* to flex and/or straighten. Arms **930***a*, **930***b* are biased towards a curved neutral position, such as the position shown in FIG. **9**, such that arms **930***a*, **930***b* return to the curved neutral position when a force from a user is removed.

Actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b* include actuation tabs **935***a*, **935***b* having actuation elements such as actuation ramps. Actuation ramps are configured to contact a surface of retaining tab **920** when arms **930***a*, **930***b* are flexed and/or straightened towards retaining tab **920**. In an exemplary embodiment, actuation tabs **935***a*, **935***b* extend from an inner surface **939***a*, **939***b* of actuation arms **930***a*, and **930***b*. Actuation elements may include front ramps **937***a*, and **937***b* and rear ramps **938***a*, **938***b*, on front and rear sides respectively, of strap retaining device **900**. In an exemplary embodiment, actuation arms and actuation elements are symmetrical when viewed from the front and the rear. Accordingly, a strap may be threaded through a strap channel **928** from the front to the rear or from the rear to the front, and a user need not consider the orientation of strap retaining device **900** when attaching a strap.

In a neutral position shown in FIG. **9**, retaining tab **920** and/or retaining features **929** (FIG. **11**) contact a strap (not shown) and may apply a force against the strap towards frame **910**. A force applied to the strap may clamp the strap against frame **910** limiting movement of the strap through strap channel **928**. The strap may be easily loosened by a user pushing actuating arms inwardly towards an actuated position shown in FIG. **11**, for example. A first actuation element, such as front and rear ramps **937***a*, **937***b*, **938***a*, or **938***b*, is movable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which front ramps **937***a* and/or **937***b* cause the retention tab to move in a second plane in a direction outwardly from front ramps **937***a* and/or **937***b*. The first actuation element, such as front and rear ramps **937***a*, **937***b*, **938***a*, or **938***b*, is further moveable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which rear ramp **938***a* and/or **938***b* causes the retention tab to move in a second plane in a direction outwardly from rear ramp **938***a* and/or **938***b*. That is, retention tab **920** may pivot outwardly in the front direction or the rear direction depending on whether one or more front ramps **937***a*, **937***b* contact retention tab **920** or one or more rear ramps **938***a*, **938***b* contact retention tab **920**. When a user squeezes actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b*, actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b* flex and/or straighten causing front ramps **937***a*, **937***b* to move in a first plane to contact engaging surfaces of retaining tab **920** and cause retaining tab **920** to move in a second plane in a direction outwardly from front ramps **937***a*, **937***b*. Alternatively, when a user squeezes actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b*, actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b* flex and/or straighten causing actuation rear ramps **938***a*, **938***b* to move in a first plane to contact engaging surfaces of retaining tab **920** and cause retaining tab **920** to move in a second plane in a direction outwardly from rear ramps **938***a*, **938***b*. Movement of retaining tab **920**, and forward movement of a portion of frame **910** resulting from straightening of actuation arms **930***a*, **930***b*, increases a space between retaining tab **920** and a portion of frame **910** such that the strap may more easily pass through strap channel **928**. With front ramps **937***a*, **937***b* or rear ramps **938***a*, **938***b* in an actuated position and retaining tab **920** raised, a user may easily increase a length of the strap.

A strap retaining device according to the present disclosure provides several advantages. A strap retaining device in which movement of actuation ramps in a first plane cause a retaining tab to move in second plane allows strap adjustments to be made by simply squeezing or pressing one or more actuation arms. Such a configuration facilitates one handed operation, or operation by a user wearing gloves that may limit dexterity. Although a retaining tab, such as retaining tab **220** for example, could be manipulated directly by a user, such operation may be difficult using only a single hand or a gloved hand, and may limit the ability of a user to quickly and easily lengthen a tensioning portion, for example, of a strap. Further, while prior devices may allow a strap to be shortened or tensioned by simply pulling the strap, a strap retaining device according to the present disclosure allows a strap to be easily lengthened or loosened, as well.

The foregoing detailed description and examples have been given for clarity of understanding only. No unnecessary limitations are to be understood there from. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that many changes can be made in the embodiments described without departing from the scope of the disclosure. Any feature or characteristic described with respect to any of the above embodiments can be incorporated individually or in combination with any other feature or characteristic, and are presented in the above order and combinations for clarity only. Thus, the scope of the present disclosure should not be limited to the exact details and structures described herein, but rather by the structures described by the language of the claims, and the equivalents of those structures.

What is claimed is:

1. A strap retaining device for a personal protection device, comprising:

a frame comprising a first frame portion and a second frame portion;

a retention tab having a first end pivotally connected to the frame at the first frame portion and a second end portion not connected to the frame;

a strap channel between the second end of the retention tab and the second frame portion; and

a first actuation arm connected to the frame and comprising a first actuation element movable towards the retention tab; and

a strap positioned in the strap channel and looped about the second frame portion;

wherein the first actuation element is movable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which the first actuation element causes the retention tab to move in a second plane that is substantially perpendicular to the first plane; and wherein the strap retention tab clamps the strap against the second portion of the frame in the neutral position.

2. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein the first actuation element is a ramp.

3. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein first actuation element contacts an angled surface of the retention tab in the actuated position.

4. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein the frame, strap retention tab, and actuation arm are integrally formed.

5. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein the frame, strap retention tab, and actuation arm are a unitary component.

6. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein the first actuation arm is a cantilever biased out of contact with the retention tab when in a neutral position.

7. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein the first actuation arm is curved when in a neutral position.

8. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, further comprising a second actuation arm attached to the frame and comprising a second actuation element movable towards the retention tab.

9. The strap retaining device of claim **8**, wherein the first actuation arm is positioned opposite the second actuation arm and the first and second actuation elements are movable towards each other.

10. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein the strap retaining device is made of plastic.

11. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein deflection of the actuation arm in the first plane towards the retention tab causes the retention tab to move in a second plane and reduce a force applied to the strap.

12. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, further comprising an attachment element extending from the frame.

13. The strap retaining device of claim **12**, wherein the attachment element extends away from the frame in a direction away from the retention tab.

14. The strap retaining device of claim **12**, wherein the attachment element comprises a tab.

15. The strap retaining device of claim **12**, wherein the attachment element comprises a hook.

16. The strap retaining device of claim **12**, wherein the attachment element comprises a loop.

17. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein the first actuation arms and first actuation element are symmetrical when viewed from the front and the rear.

18. The strap retaining device of claim **1**, wherein the first actuation element includes a front ramp and a rear ramp.

19. The strap retaining device of claim **18**, wherein the first actuation element is movable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which a front ramp causes the retention tab to move in a second plane in a direction outwardly from the front ramp, and the first actuation is further moveable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which the rear ramp causes the retention tab to move in a second plane in a direction outwardly from the rear ramp.

20. A harness assembly for a respirator, comprising:

First and second strap retaining devices each including a frame comprising a first frame portion and a second frame portion, a retention tab having a first end pivotally connected to the frame at the first frame portion and a second end portion not connected to the frame, a strap channel and a first actuation arm connected to the frame and comprising a first actuation ramp movable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which the first actuation ramp contacts a surface of the retention tab and causes the retention tab to move in a second plane that is perpendicular to the first plane;

a first strap positioned in a strap channel of the first strap retainer about a portion of the frame of the first strap retainer; and

a second strap positioned in a strap channel of the second strap retainer about a portion of the frame of the second strap retaining devices;

wherein the first strap retaining device comprises a first attachment element and the second strap retaining device comprises a second attachment element and the first attachment element is attachable to the second attachment element, and wherein the strap retention tabs of the first and second strap retaining devices clamp the first and second straps, respectively, against the second portion of the frame when in a neutral position.

21. The harness assembly of claim **20**, wherein the first and second straps are positionable about the neck of a wearer when the first attachment element is attached to the second attachment element.

22. The harness assembly of claim **20**, wherein the first attachment element comprises a hook.

23. The harness assembly of claim **21**, wherein the second attachment element comprises a loop.

24. The harness assembly of claim **20**, further comprising:

a strap support positionable about a user's head and including a strap retainer receiver;

a third strap retaining device including a frame, a retention tab pivotally connected to the frame, a strap channel and a first actuation arm connected to the frame and comprising a first actuation ramp movable in a first plane from a neutral position to an actuated position in which the first actuation ramp contacts a surface of the retention tab and causes the retention tab to move in a second plane that is perpendicular to the first plane; and

a third strap positioned in a strap channel about a portion of the frame of the third strap retaining device;

wherein the strap retainer comprises a third attachment element attachable to the strap retainer receptacle.

25. The harness assembly of claim **24**, wherein the third attachment element comprises an anchoring tab.

26. The harness assembly of claim **24**, wherein the third strap is positionable about the head of a user when the third attachment element is attached to the strap retainer receptacle of the strap support.

* * * * *